

Murphy, State Leaders to Address Critical Statewide Nursing Shortage, Discuss Funding for Connecticut State University System's Nursing Program

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NEW BRITAIN, CT - Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) was joined by state education and legislative leaders at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain to discuss funding he is working to secure for the Connecticut State University System's (CSUS) nursing program to address the state's nursing shortage.

According to the Connecticut League for Nursing, Connecticut ranked 49th out of 50 states in producing nurses in 2005. In 2005, Connecticut faced a 20% shortage of RNs; by 2010, this shortage is expected to increase to 33%. This critical shortage has a significant impact on healthcare in Connecticut and the safety of all residents.

"It's no secret that our healthcare system is broken. Addressing the nursing shortage crisis is one important step that we must take to improve quality and access to healthcare across the country. In Connecticut, we clearly have a need for more nurses, and by working with our own statewide university system, we can make a difference," said Murphy.

The CSUS asked Murphy to seek funding through the annual Congressional appropriations process for a system-wide project to address Connecticut's nursing shortage and nursing faculty shortages at state schools. Murphy was able to secure \$185,000 for CSUS in the appropriate appropriations bill, which was approved by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. If approved by Congress and signed into law by the President, this funding will be used as seed money to increase capacity at all four CSUS universities (Central, Western, Southern, and Eastern Connecticut State Universities) to educate and graduate nursing students, provide graduate training opportunities, and for scholarships and equipment.

The CSUS has graduated the most nurses with Bachelors Degrees in the State of Connecticut during the past five years and is a critical pipeline feeding the state's severe nursing workforce shortage. Since 86% of CSUS graduates remain in Connecticut after graduation, such funding is truly an investment in the state.

Dr. Mitch Sakofs, dean of Central Connecticut State University's School of Education & Professional Studies, said, "We thank congressman Murphy for his efforts to bring funding to support our nursing programs. This excellent investment in education could help us to meet one of the state's most critical workforce shortages."

"I believe support for public higher education is essential to bring the brightest and the best into the Connecticut State University System in an attempt to begin to address the growing need for nurses who with adequate experience and academic counseling will move along a professional career trajectory in seeking higher education. Baccalaureate education is essential to the provision of safe, high quality patient care. Research demonstrates a correlation between level of education and increased mortality and morbidity. We need increased capacity in baccalaureate programs so we can begin to address the growing provider crisis in health care," Dr. Mary Jane Williams, Chair of Government Relations, Connecticut Nurses Association; Chair of the Department of Nursing, University of Hartford; and professor emeritus, Central Connecticut State University.

"Thank you to Congressman Murphy for recognizing the challenge for our state and working toward a solution. Funding is critically needed. Nursing programs are among the most costly educational programs for our colleges to administer. Connecticut has been taking baby steps toward addressing the nursing shortage. Recent state initiatives addressing the nursing shortage have not been adequate. The task will require a collaborative effort with federal, state and private support," said State Representative Roberta B. Willis, Chair of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

"RNs provide a vital link between the doctors who diagnose and prescribe treatment for patients and those who need that level of hands-on care, but staff shortages prompt older nurses to retire earlier and there simply aren't enough nurses in school to replace them," said State Senator Mary Ann Handley (D-Manchester), the Senate Chair of the legislature's Public Health Committee. "The funding Rep. Murphy describes would address this unsustainable squeeze in a couple ways, by increasing CSU capacity to educate nursing students and by providing the financial assistance they need to complete their education and training."

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